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FAITH AND FACTS:

Credulity versus
Common Sense

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BY
INQUIRER



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PREFACE

THROUGHOUT our short lives, and down the long vistas of past history, we find in nature universal law and order prevailing everywhere without a break. Under such circumstances, overwhelming evidence is now loudly demanded to establish the astounding assertion that this happy unity of design has ever been momentarily suspended, at any time, by any miraculous agency.

Our Bibles tell us we should have "a reason to give for the faith that is in us." No one accepting this ancient dictum as a Divine command can desire to stifle the fullest inquiry.

The following pages attempt, in a few plain words, to point out—as in a nutshell—the slender authority upon which religious fanaticism builds its dogmas; a position that common sense, supported by simple facts, altogether disputes.

When instituting an impartial investigation into the truths of Christianity, we cannot conceal from ourselves the knowledge that two other creeds, larger than our own, preaching the purest altruism, flourish in the present day, each alike claiming that it, too, solely possesses, through saving faith, authentic passports to perpetual pleasure!

But few people fully realise—if, as Jewish Scriptural tradition asserts, there exists a personal controlling agency, directing the movements of countless solar systems, including our own insignificant planet—that his habitat (for he is distinctly masculine) must be sought in limitless regions of eternal night and inconceivable cold. It is only in the vicinity of incandescent suns that light and heat are generated at all. Where, then, shall we locate the awful thrones of Jahveh, Allah, Brahma, Zeus, Bel, Isis, and Osiris, and hundreds

of other mythical beings whose very names have disappeared, while their temple stones remain as everlasting monuments of human credulity and superstition ?

In concluding these brief introductory remarks, why, we would ask, should a benevolent Creator have selected a very unimportant little strip of the Syrian littoral—not two hundred miles square—in which to perform all his wonders ? Surely the virtues of the back-sliding Hebrews never entitled them to enjoy so distinguished a position. Every nation that exists invariably considers itself divinely protected and inspired. Is the rest of mankind to forego all its rights in favour of the Children of Israel ?

We venture to suggest that a Bible should be in the hands of every inquirer perusing these pages, as a ready means of speedily verifying the veracity of statements herein advanced.

INQUIRER.

April, 1905.

FAITH AND FACTS:

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I.

OLD TESTAMENT ERRORS

THE Hebrew history of creation, chronicled in the book of Genesis, has for many centuries been accepted literally, with implicit faith, by enlightened Europe. Now that these contradictory records are proved beyond question, according to recent research, to be inaccurate in every detail, it is interesting to analyse the principal legends which have been the source of error for so long a period.

When we recollect that unbelief, until quite modern times, was promptly punished throughout united Christendom by the thumbscrew and the stake, "for the glory of the Lord," it is easy to conceive how superstition, supported by ecclesiastical tyranny and clerical intolerance, flourished under such favourable auspices without the least opposition. Wise men of the Middle Ages, not caring to be tortured in private or burnt in public, prudently maintained a discreet silence on religious subjects. Geology and astronomy have only in the last fifty years become popular sciences available to all readers.

"The Holy Bible" in former eras was looked upon

by all men as a singularly sacred book, every sentence in it being reverently received as the actual word of a mighty God—a distinct communication offered from Heaven to earth. In the twentieth century, with superior knowledge, it is ascertained by Oriental scholars to be a collection of ancient Arian myths and extravagant Eastern tales, emanating from a variety of unreliable sources. Foremost among these figure the Elohist and Jehovist traditions, so-called, by the particular name of God—made use of in one instance, and Lord God in the other, to define the Deity. In the first chapter of the book of Genesis and the first three verses of the second chapter we have the Elohist account of the great Creation, describing how a very anthropomorphic First Cause, called Elohim or God, produced this planet some six thousand years ago, in six days' time; the evening and the morning distinctly determining each period of cosmic gestation with marked emphasis. We use the word "anthropomorphic" advisedly—"And God said, Let us make man *in our own image*. *In the image of God created he him.*" It is impossible for language to be more explicit. The primitive savages who first conceived this preposterous "origin of the species" evidently regarded their world-maker as an all-powerful and somewhat malevolent magician, residing in the clouds immediately above our earth's crust, possessing arms, legs, hands, eyes, nose, and mouth—indeed, every organ of humanity, all of which we find him making separate use of from time to time.

Chapter i. depicts in very poetic language the Divine Ruler moving on the face of the waters as he fashioned, by his Almighty fiat, this little world

of ours in limitless ether—regardless of every law of gravity and motion! Light, produced on the first day, was evidently considered by the sacred historian as something entirely apart from solar influences. It was not till the fourth day that the sun, the moon, and the stars made their necessary appearance, and then only are they spoken of as tributary beacons. Now, it is an undisputed fact that this small planet on which we live could not have remained in space for one single instant without its central support sustaining it in position as a dependent satellite.

That our earth was considered to be flat is evidenced by the Jewish heavens being somehow sandwiched in between certain celestial and terrestrial layers of water—"those above and those below the firmament" (see Genesis i. 7). What, we may ask, has now become of the waters above the firmament? Fishes, birds, and beasts were next formed in due order, both sexes being mentioned. Subsequently creeping things, which must include the saurians, made their advent. Finally, man and woman, male and female, were produced simultaneously on the sixth day as the last effort of creative ingenuity. The seventh day, we are told, was needed for complete rest by the exhausted Deity. The eighth or the ninth—or, indeed, a whole week's holiday—might just as well have been added, as no further work has since been undertaken. Thus a seventh portion of time set apart for repose was evidently selected by the Semitic race in order to confirm a desirable Eastern custom which had probably become law in many lands ages before this eccentric story of a fabulous creation, altogether disproved by geology and astronomy, had first seen daylight. Such is the Elohist record.

In the fourth verse of the second chapter the Jehovistic romance commences ; wherein, to our astonishment, we ascertain that man, our alleged first father, was formed singly—without a wife—prior to the birth of the animals, from among whom, we are told, he naturally could find no helpmeet!—a most singular suggestion. These newly-made animals were all brought separately to be named by Adam, who received advice from God while walking with him in the cool of the Garden of Eden. Such completely contradictory versions of early events, although reflecting great credit on Adam's powers of nomenclature, throw the gravest doubts on the accuracy of either the first or second narrative. The creation of Eve at a later date, formed from a single rib subtracted from her husband, reminds the student of Minerva springing, fully armed, from the head of Jupiter, and would seem equally probable of actual fulfilment as the Roman legend. No rivers (excepting the Euphrates) exist such as those mentioned in Genesis ; Pison, Gihon, and Hiddekel, all flowing from one common source, in certain specified districts, are purely mythical.

In relation to the "Fall," we must confess to unmixed surprise at the highly equivocal means employed by a benevolent Deity to ruin humanity ! The magic apple and the talking snake could only have been placed in the enchanted garden by a far-seeing God to entangle and ensnare our simple progenitors, who, if they yielded a trifle too readily to the persuasive eloquence of a seductive boa-constrictor (or it may have been to the artful arguments of a wily puff-adder), were guilty of no more serious offence than that of a very slight breach of filial obedience, which should have been forgiven as

soon as committed. We, of course, dismiss as childish nonsense the Talmud legend that our first mother, in a moment of weakness, committed adultery with the subtle serpent.

The story of the death of Abel demands careful attention. Cain, when his vegetables were rejected, after murdering his successful rival was condemned to become, in future, a fugitive and a vagabond on the face of our newly-made universe; yet, notwithstanding the forlorn condition to which he was reduced by this well-merited curse, he forthwith built a city and married a wife! No city could possibly have been created without building material, nor was there anyone but himself, and subsequently his son, to occupy the town when completed. As to matrimony, the only woman living when these tragic events took place was the bereaved mother Eve. It is possible that at a later date she might have given birth to marriageable daughters, but none were specified as being born at the time of Cain's alleged nuptials. In any case, the laws of consanguinity would have been strangely violated. The mark on Cain's forehead deserves special notice. A brand so conspicuously placed could have only called instant attention to his former misconduct. It is hard to understand why vengeance should have been threatened "sevenfold" to anyone taking the criminal's life, when the Divine decree ordains that "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." The latter part of verse seven in the fourth chapter seems devoid of all meaning; and it is equally difficult to discover what moral can possibly be deduced from Lameck's interesting confession to his wives, Adah and Zillah, of a murder he, too, appears to have cleverly contrived, and

secretly executed, without either detection or punishment. See also Lamech's contradictory pedigrees, chapters iv. and v.

The universal deluge is the next event that sadly taxes our powers of credulity. A race of demi-gods—giants in stature and men of renown, resulting from too frequent intercourse between “the sons of God” and the daughters of men!—women of exceeding beauty, but of elastic morality—could not all (forgetful of their divine parentage) have been so desperately depraved as to require complete annihilation. Whence arose that vast volume of water, girdling the whole earth some six miles in depth, and what became of it when its purpose was accomplished? Did Polar bears swim 3,000 miles without hindrance from Arctic seas seeking the sunny slopes of Syrian mountains, through the narrow Straits of rock-bound Gibraltar? Were the gorgeous varieties of South American birds and butterflies transported by miraculous agencies across the stormy Atlantic, to find a safe asylum in the distant peaks of lonely Ararat? How did the kangaroos take shipping from Australia; and in what manner did other indigenous animals, including reptiles, find means to transplant themselves to the right spot from enormous distances at the critical moment? The journey, in numerous cases, must have occupied months, and even years, to accomplish. Biblical accounts as to the duration of the Flood vary considerably, and are extremely difficult to decipher. Three diluvial periods can be more or less defined—one of 40 days, one of 150 days, and one of 375 days. This latter figure is arrived at by the information afforded that, on the seventeenth day of the second month of the venerable patriarch's 600th year, Noah entered the refuge he had so laboriously

constructed; nor was it till the twenty-seventh day of the second month of his 601st year that he emerged therefrom, accompanied by that happy family whose safety his timely forethought had so providentially secured. Within the ark—a place of absolute darkness, save for one small window, about two feet square—some attempts may have been made, as stated, to victual the floating fortress; but, whatever steps were undertaken by the enterprising architect, the whole commissariat could only have been successfully accomplished by supernatural agencies. Nor does “Holy Writ” give us any clue in what manner the food supply was maintained when the heterogeneous assembly was ultimately dispersed. There could have been nothing available on the earth’s surface for many months to come wherewith to support life. How carnivorous animals contrived to exist during and after their long captivity without flesh is extremely puzzling. Another curious contradiction presents itself. These marvellous waters, we are told, “prevailed upwards” for fifteen cubits (English dimensions $22\frac{1}{2}$ feet); but, as we also learn that the tops of the highest mountains throughout the world were completely submerged, such a flood would require a measurement not of fifteen cubits, but of considerably more than 15,000 cubits! Kunchinjinga, the foremost peak of the Himalaya range, attaining an altitude of 28,156 feet above the sea level, decides the exact elevation. Only eighteen inches correspond to a Jewish cubit, which was so called from that standard being the supposed distance between the elbow-joint and the point of the middle finger. It is passing strange why Noah dispatched a dove from his malodorous garage

to determine when the disembarkation might be prudent, as his own eyes should have been far more reliable guides than any chance olive leaf imported by a cooing cushat. As to the question of what number entered God's famous haven of refuge, the accounts are, as usual, extremely unsatisfactory, one version stating that of clean birds and animals seven of a kind, male and female, attained safety. That would make fourteen of each variety. Another contradictory legend announces that only two of a sort accepted salvation! The fourteenth chapter of Deuteronomy does not specify all the unclean animals. The hare and the coney are, however, strangely included in the sacred catalogue, the remarkable reason being advanced that "they chew the cud and divide not the hoof"!

In Egypt much of the delicate papyrii, and many of the earlier tombs, are of more ancient date than the 2469 years B.C. assigned by theologians to the Deluge; yet these show no marks whatever of having been several miles under water for over a year's duration. As the negro and other types were as clearly defined then as now, when did they begin to differentiate from Noachian parentage?

A Babylonian tablet of considerable interest is preserved in the British Museum. It belongs to a far earlier period than is assigned to the story published in the books attributed to Moses, and clearly refers to the same tragic event, depicting a plurality of Assyrian deities presiding over a submergence of precisely identical character. Hassis-Asdra takes the place of Noah; Istar, Merodach, Bell, Nebo, and others, are malevolent celestials. Ea, a kind god, assists mankind, and aids in the arduous construction of a sailing vessel, into

which, besides the animals, many friends and relations were considerably invited to enter. At the expiration of a month's incessant downpour a raven was loosened to report progress. It is stated that this defeated emissary, finding "no resting-place for the soles of his feet," returned forthwith to his perplexed captain. As the words in each account are identical, the source whence the Biblical scribes derived "copy" is conclusive. When a sacrifice of harmless animals was offered in each instance to slaughter-loving Deities at the termination of the hazardous voyages, instead of a sweet-smelling savour of burnt meat tickling the nostrils of the Chaldean hierarchy, we read that that heavenly host, being more hungry, swarmed around the altar like hiving bees in spring-time, anxious to begin the feast at once. No rainbow is mentioned as a token of any divine promise in the more ancient chronicle. Assyrian seers were far too sensible to suppose that sunlight falling upon rain-drops ever failed in presenting prismatic arcs as often as the two came in conjunction.

Quite recently additional euphic tablets have been recovered, upsetting not only the Biblical description of Cyrus the Great, but proving, moreover, the inaccuracy of a well-known Pagan writer.

From the sharply-incised arrow-headed inscriptions on the plastic clay we learn that the great king above named was throughout his life a devoted worshipper of his own gods; and, instead of being converted to Judaism, he was invariably received with every manifestation of respect by the priests of Babylon, who always regarded him as a devoted upholder of their ancient traditions.

Herodotus describes Cyrus as the bastard offspring of

an indiscreet Persian princess, his paternal progenitor being altogether unknown. The cylinder in question tells us that, on the contrary, Cyrus was the legitimate descendant of a long line of ancient Chaldean kings, born in lawful wedlock, and makes no mention whatever of the scandal circulated by the gifted Grecian.

It is singular that Noah, described as "a just man" and "perfect in his generation, walking with God," should shortly after his memorable escape have become blind drunk, indecently exposing his naked person to the gaze of his astonished family, who were naturally much scandalised by the disgraceful exhibition. Ham's offence on this occasion is not very clearly defined. The drunken patriarch must have been still in his cups when he cursed his grandson Canaan instead of Ham for the crime, which, when he awoke from his unhappy debauch, he accused his second son of having committed. "And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him"! The immoral manner in which "righteous Lot" became the father of the Moabites and Ammonites is another sad example of the deplorable sin of intemperance. See Genesis, chapter xix.

The Father of the Faithful, and his son Isaac, seem to have held very slack views as to the sanctity of the marriage tie, inasmuch as we find both worthies quite willing to hand over their faithful helpmeets (highly attractive women, although one of them was past ninety) to the amorous advances of Abimelech, King of Gerar. The same scandalous anecdote, with certain variations, is thrice repeated—twice of holy Abraham and once of accommodating Isaac. Sarah and Rebecca, as modest matrons, do not appear to have resisted quite so

vigorously as we could have wished the summary surrender of their persons to the passionate proposals of the Philistine potentate. Fortunately, the mistake was found out just in time, and the abducted women were speedily returned to these craven husbands, who prized the chastity of their yielding wives as little as they valued the preservation of their personal honour! Sarah, in defence of such flighty conduct, was said to have been actually Abraham's sister—an assertion altogether inaccurate, as in verse 31, chapter xi., she is specially spoken of as the daughter-in-law, and not as the daughter, of Terah, Abraham's father. In one of the other strange versions of this ambiguous anecdote, Pharaoh, King of Egypt (all kings of Egypt were called Pharaoh), takes the place of Abimelech, King of Gerar. In both instances the fascinating Sarah appears to have inspired either monarch with precisely similar aspirations (Genesis xii., xx., xxvi.).

The confusion of tongues presents many serious stumbling-blocks in the path of determined believers. Why, we would ask, should the construction of a lofty monument be condemned by any rational ruler who, it appears, came "down" from heaven purposely to inspect what was taking place below? "Yahveh" surely did not fear the incursion of mortals into immortal resting-places! Language is as much a matter of gradual progression as the development of *homo sapiens* from the simple moneron. Can we suppose that our parts of speech—which we know, after reading Max Müller, have been slowly evolved from primary roots by gradual descent—were suddenly created complete as we now find them by an impossible conjuring trick, hurled as a senseless punishment

against a few busy mechanics who were doing no more conceivable harm to anybody than those honest Parisian workmen who, not long since, erected with patient toil the Eiffel Tower at the French Exhibition?

The plagues of Egypt were awarded by God upon a hard-hearted Pharaoh for his contumacious resistance to the departure of his chosen people. That age of miracles was indeed very ripe in special wonders, for the accomplished Egyptian necromancers were certainly at first quite as expert in producing abnormal conditions as the great Law-giver himself. It is true they are represented as breaking down a bit towards the end of the competition; but the creation of frogs, serpents, and blood we should conceive to be equally difficult of achievement as the calling into existence of flies, lice, and boils. Early commentators consider that the assistance of the Prince of Darkness was secured by the southern soothsayers; but not once in the Pentateuch is any allusion made to hell or to his Satanic majesty. Shaitan and his bottomless pit, located in this unimportant planet, had not then been invented.

A census inquiry gives the fighting strength of the Children of Israel during the famous "exodus" from Egypt at 600,000 warriors. Trebling that figure, we arrive at their total numerical force, including women and children. The daily consumption of quails and manna for such a mighty host must have been something truly prodigious, when we reflect that each healthy Hebrew could probably have digested with considerable ease four or five of those succulent little morsels at a single meal. A flight of quite six or eight million birds per diem would be about the figure required to satisfy all demands of hunger. As the

manna failed to fall on Sundays, we are surprised to hear that dew and rain did not likewise cease on that holy day. That the Saturday supply kept good for forty-eight hours instead of twenty-four, at the end of the week, was another special act of sustaining Providence. After measuring upon the map the close proximity between Memphis and Jerusalem, some 300 miles apart, we can sympathise with those weary backsliders who, sighing for the flesh-pots of Egypt, complained, not without good reason, that forty years in the Wilderness of Sin was an extravagant time to occupy over an insignificant little journey in search of a promised land, abounding with milk and honey.

In the eleventh verse of the thirty-third chapter of Exodus we ascertain that during these strangely protracted wanderings Moses spake with God "face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend." In verses twenty to twenty-three of the same identical chapter God tells him, "Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see my face and live." Moses, therefore, was kindly permitted to inspect his Maker's "hinder parts" from behind a convenient cleft in an adjacent rock, screened by the Almighty hand! Can contradiction be carried to further lengths than this?

In reference to Joshua forcibly delaying the progress of the sun, as described in the book bearing his name, does anybody in this age of enlightenment suppose that the diurnal revolutions of our planet were ever for one moment arrested, as also those of our lunar satellite, in order to permit a trumpery tribal battle to be fought out by the Israelites against the Amorites? Astronomy assures us that the eternal harmony of the spheres could not thus be arbitrarily disposed of; so the statement

that the sun stood still for twelve hours over favoured Gibeon, and the moon in the war-swept valley of Ajalon, can only be regarded as one of the many misleading myths that crystallise so frequently around ancient traditions of the Jewish nationality.

It is very clear from many passages in the Bible that slavery and polygamy were cordially approved of by the God of Moses, as well as by all the other deities that Eastern priests—thousands of years anterior to Moses—had evolved from their fantastic imaginations. The slaughter and separation of captive families countenanced by God seems altogether unjustifiable!

The humiliating position occupied by Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, during their youth under the eunuch Ashpenaz in the Chaldean Court, was certainly not one to be envied.

An amazing similarity exists between the dreams of Belteshazzar and those emanating from Patmos.

A great point is made by Churchmen that their venerable Hebrew Scriptures cannot be accepted literally. This is the purest casuistry and mere special pleading. An omniscient Creator, if he had ever revealed himself in any holy book, would not, when he expressed himself in one way, expect to be understood in entirely another. Words mean what their simple interpretation warrant, and not something altogether different, which is only assigned to them when their ordinary significance is found to be opposed to every canon of common sense and established fact.

How does any learned commentator venture to explain the following Divine denunciation, contained in the thirteenth chapter of Ezekiel: "Thus saith the Lord God; Woe to the women that sew pillows to all

armholes, and make kerchiefs upon the head of every stature to hunt souls ! Will ye hunt the souls of my people, and will ye save the souls alive that come unto you?.....Wherefore thus saith the Lord God ; Behold, I am against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make them fly, and I will tear them from your arms, and will let the souls go, even the souls that ye hunt to make them fly."

The sin of unbelief is not now so much insisted upon as it was formerly. A spirit of impartial inquiry is abroad everywhere. Honest dissenters cannot, in the present enlightened age, be promptly handed over to ascetic inquisitors of the Holy Office to be foully murdered unless, through fear of death, they agreed to accept palpable falsehoods in the place of sincere convictions.

In the preceding pages we have quoted only a few among the numerous inaccuracies the Old Testament narrative repeatedly presents to us. Many of these grotesque fables are opposed to every idea of truth, justice, modesty, and morality. A blind belief in the incomprehensible fall of mankind by snake enchantment, together with other childish traditions, has practically terminated ; and redemption—for a puerile crime that certainly was never committed—naturally disappears likewise. The gods are dead ; or, if not dead, they are at least in a very moribund condition. Jupiter has left Olympus ; Thor and Odin no longer reign on Scandinavian mountains. Isis and Osiris have forgotten to lament the loss of their beloved Horus, or Demeter to mourn for the rape of her abducted Proserpine. Bramah the creator, Vishnu the preserver, and Siva the destroyer may still hold mystic sway on the fertile banks of the Indus and the Ganges ; but learned

pundits of the twentieth century, educated in European universities, have altogether lost faith in their primitive Hindoo trilogy. "The sable reign" of monks and mullahs has passed away for ever. Priests in petticoats, in endeavouring to extinguish the torch of eternal truth, only soil their gorgeous garments and burn their saintly fingers in the vain attempt. Pictures of the "pale Galilean" and his beautiful mother continue to adorn the sacred shrines of Catholic cathedrals; but, while we venerate a sublime altruism, the godhead disappears.

The latest views of German philosophers are very trenchant. They broach the theory that, as no celestial influences, benevolent or otherwise, have ever yet been apparent in matters mundane, and as all the prayers of all the Churches have never yet received a single historical answer, creative energy—the force that sets in motion a countless number of solar systems throughout infinite space by uniting cosmic atoms in innumerable world-centres—is nothing more than primary causation, to which no personal existence can possibly be attached.

Such thinkers demand no hereafter. As we are ignorant of any beginning, so are we, they say, of any end. Should an improbable sphere of future happiness be awarded to mankind, it must be accorded also to all things, animate and inanimate, that once possessed life. "Man that is born of woman is few of days and full of trouble." Why should we wish to carry those troubles beyond the restful grave?

II.

NEW TESTAMENT CONTRADICTIONS

WE have had occasion to comment on the most striking contradictions contained in the books of Genesis. Those of the New Testament afford equally interesting material for truth-seeking criticism.

The Christian belief in the death sacrifice of a benevolent demi-god, as a fitting atonement for a trumpery act of disobedience, attributed to a man who never existed, is the more remarkable when we reflect that nothing in the fictitious Adam's original condemnation warrants for one moment the extravagant assumption, so dear to demented theologians, that eternal damnation was ever, either directly or indirectly, awarded by an irritated Deity upon erring humanity. Throughout the Old Testament dispensation, as it is called, if we accept the contracted chronology of Biblical commentators, no such preposterous idea prevailed, nor is it once mentioned in Christ's teachings as recorded by the four Evangelists. "The Saviour" suffered martyrdom, it was then alleged, as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, but not as a victim for any original guilt entailed by Adam; that was a Pauline conception altogether at variance with previous tradition. The argument has never yet been satisfactorily answered why, if Adam's so-called stupendous crime could justify the infliction of eternal

torments on earth's luckless inhabitants, four thousand years should have elapsed before God himself considerably invented a desirable atonement by which his unreasonable displeasure became appeased? Unless the vicarious sacrifice was retrospective, at least a billion pre-Christian souls are at the present moment undergoing everlasting torture for the unfortunate lapse committed by their too inquisitive ancestor. Let us for an instant examine what is meant by the grotesque rite of sacrifice so common to all uncivilised communities. Are we to imagine that the Supreme Ruler of countless spheres derived, in former days, so much satisfaction when witnessing the death agonies of bullocks, goats, kids, rams, pigeons, lambs, etc., that the least little whiff of a burnt-offering ascending from this whirling world of ours caused him to remit sin as often as the unsavoury odour assailed his sensitive nostrils? Luckily, with the spread of civilisation, God's nature has altogether changed for the better, and he now no longer sternly demands such unreasonable observances. The love of law has been replaced by the law of love.

External evidence, apart from the Bible, of New Testament history, in a time of considerable enlightenment, is altogether non-existent. The short interpolation in Josephus contains no proof whatever of Christ's divine origin, and a statement in the Gemara (the forerunner of the Talmud) that Jesus was first stoned and then hanged on the 14th day of Nisam cannot be accepted as reliable. No profane historian ever made serious mention of the wonder-working prophet of Nazareth, nor did the Jews, who had by far the best opportunity of judging, accept either his miracles or his ministration.

Such negation by those who were eye-witnesses of all that happened should make us extremely cautious at the outset of an impartial inquiry.

The trial of Paul by Felix, the Roman Governor, gives an interesting insight into the opinion entertained by the highest Jewish authorities towards the early followers of the new faith. The high priest, ordained by God and all the elders, denounced him through their orator Tertullius as a pestilent fellow, a mover of sedition among the Jews, a leader of revolt, and a profaner of their temple. The Romans never persecuted any creed the conduct of whose followers was blameless. The orgies of the Agapæ (or love feasts) possibly demanded summary suppression.

The Christian religion is founded on certain sacred gospels and epistles selected by a miracle from among a considerable number of other legends, all of which have since been discarded as fictitious and unreliable. Four of these gospels attributed to well-known apostles living in the time of Christ are held by the Churches as the absolute and authentic words of a divine and incomprehensible Trinity. If such messages from heaven can be proved to contradict themselves in numerous important particulars, the historic value of the whole ceases to exist. We will now quote a few instances in confirmation of the foregoing assertion.

A genealogy is given to determine the kingly descent of Christ from the royal house of David in fulfilment of several prophecies. Two accounts are furnished—one by Matthew, the other by Luke. The princely pedigree propounded by the infallible Matthew offers precisely fourteen fewer forefathers than that emanating from the sacred stylus of the divinely-inspired Luke. A

discrepancy of at least four hundred years has, by this means, inadvertently crept in between the two contradictory versions.

We are further informed by Matthew (i. 17) that fourteen generations intervene between the accession of King David and the Babylonian captivity. This particular portion of God's word is again unfortunately wholly at variance with established facts, as seventeen, not fourteen, is the true figure, Matthew having strangely omitted, by some singular oversight, the reigns of Ahaziah, Joas, and Amaziah. To rectify the mistake, the erring evangelist falsely represents Ahaziah's father, Joram, as the parent of Amaziah's son Ozias (or Uzzias). Instead of that close relationship existing, they really stood in the position of great-great-grandfather and great-great-grandson to one another (see Chronicles xxii.-xxv.). Perhaps the most misleading feature connected with these mysterious descents is the fact that both Apostles furnish a royal pedigree, through Joseph. A divine conception by an immaculate virgin with the physical aid of the Holy Ghost had undoubtedly not been contemplated when the conflicting lineages were first fabricated.

Can any expert from Herald's College attempt to explain how Christ's supposed ancestry, descending in two separate streams through Solomon and Nathan, sons of David, could possibly re-unite either in his own person or in those of Salathiel and Zerobabel, who are introduced into the midst of both categories. The thing is absurd and impossible; nor are either genealogies that of the Virgin Mary, as some erroneously assert. To sum up, we are asked to believe that the great Architect of a thousand million

solar systems, some two thousand years ago, became the fleshly father of a male child through marital relations with the "espoused" wife of a Syrian artisan! to which workman she subsequently bore four other sons, half-brothers to an All-powerful God—viz., James, Joses, Juda, and Simon, as well as daughters unnamed (Mark vi. 3). Such a barbaric belief could only have been formulated when the gods of old were deemed to dwell in lofty clouds, on the tops of classic mountains, whence, according to Grecian and Roman mythology, they frequently descended to enjoy the rights of matrimony with favoured mortals.

Another series of contradictions very shortly develop. St. Matthew tells us that certain "wise men from the East," perceiving a star in the East, came to the curious conclusion—why, we are not told—that it predicted the birth of a Messiah. Following the fugitive beacon, under its miraculous guidance, they found themselves in Jerusalem. This is most singular, as, journeying from the far East, their course must necessarily have been due west to gain the Jewish capital. Herod, the king, seems to have acted most irrationally over the whole matter, for, without demanding any credentials in support of a strange God, thus preternaturally foretold, that potentate, taking the extraordinary phenomenon as a matter of every-day occurrence, at once expressed a zealous desire to worship at the shrine of the new Divinity. Immediately afterwards, in a fit of hasty spleen (considering that the wise men had mocked him), he forthwith sought to destroy the very Deity he had previously wished to venerate! This wicked desire was most easy of fulfilment, as, having directed the Eastern sages to Bethlehem, only a short ride from his

central seat of government, he might at once have located the object of his hatred and forthwith put his cruel design into execution. The flight to Egypt, in Matthew's version, was, however, considered necessary to fulfil certain ambiguous prophecies, so Joseph and his family, with the assistance of an angel, escaped to the banks of the Nile, and all the first-born two-year-old children and under in Judea were slaughtered without mercy and without reason, the infant Christ being but a new-born babe at the time ! There can be no question that Luke, the only other writer who discourses on the opening events of the Christian era, knew nothing whatever about the Magi, the escape to Egypt, or the destruction of the first-born. The wise men, in his narrative, change themselves into simple shepherds tending their fleecy flocks in the fields around the sacred city of the Nativity. Our belief that angel visitants imparted to these rustic herdsmen any information as to Mary's interesting condition is somewhat shaken when we learn from travellers that there is not a blade of grass for a lark to sing on within fifty miles of the town of Bethlehem. But our surprise is still greater when, further on, we are informed that the Holy family, instead of taking any hasty flight at all into Egypt, retraced their steps direct to Nazareth, *viâ* Jerusalem. On the eighth day after birth the infant Christ was duly circumcised ; and "when the forty days of Mary's purification were accomplished," his parents forthwith carried their new-born babe back to Jerusalem to be "presented to the Lord." Quitting that resting-place, and having "performed all things according to the law of the Lord," they returned into Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth.

In describing the miracle of the blind men regaining their sight, St. Matthew and St. Mark distinctly state that it occurred on the departure of the Messiah from the town of Jericho; the former mentions two patients as being cured, while the latter defines Bartimæus, the son of Timæus, as the only fortunate convalescent. St. Luke, in his narrative, alludes to one sightless mendicant, but informs us that the act of divine omnipotence took place on entering, and not on leaving, the city!

Those who practise Bibliolatry, swallowing open-mouthed Old and New Testament inconsistencies with fish-like avidity, have never yet explained why their God, if he wished to give evidence of supernatural qualifications, issued strict orders that his healing powers should be carefully concealed by those whose happy recovery he had so successfully effected. Can people be accused of unbelief if they fail to subscribe to miraculous anecdotes, the attestation of which, in their judgment, is altogether insufficient? Till the age of thirty an all-powerful God is said to have resided in one little out-of-the-way spot on this earth's surface, unknown to all the rest of the civilised world. Three years later, after trial, he was put to death—presumably for sedition—without having in the least established his celestial mission, which might have been made manifest in one moment, to the absolute conviction of every human being, had a Divine Power so willed.

It is remarkable that no single miracle performed by an alleged God to substantiate his so-called great design was of the least general interest or utility. The simple cures effected by the faith-healing prophet of Nazareth in a very unimportant Roman province was hardly the way to persuade humanity that the mighty

Creator of the starry universe was about to suffer death on this terrestrial molecule in expiation of his own unjust decree condemning to everlasting torment earth's unhappy children, by far the larger part of whom had never received the least intimation of their unaccountable sentence or supposed means of salvation.

The raising of Lazarus from the tomb, after burial at Bethany, close to Jerusalem, was certainly one of the most important manifestations of Christ's supreme power. Is it possible to imagine that the synoptic authors of the first three Gospels could have wilfully omitted to mention such a convincing display of supernatural authority, had it ever really happened in their time? Are not the probabilities far greater that the whole story was a later invention unknown to those who compiled the earlier histories?

In the first Gospel we find mention made of several resurrected saints, who "appeared unto many" on the sad occasion of the Crucifixion. Josephus could not have ignored these remarkable prodigies had they actually occurred. We ascertain from quotations given by Eusebius, from Papias A.D. 150, that the book of Matthew was, when he lived, only a collection of speeches, or discourses, which "everyone translated as best he could," and that Papias himself declared his decided preference for oral tradition to any of the sacred writings then current. For more than a hundred and fifty years we have indeed no reliable clue how frequently or how often the Apostolic manuscripts were manipulated to suit the different dogmas edited by the early founders of Christianity. Nor can we fix a possible date as to when the original documents first appeared. Small errors are observable in almost every page of the New Testament

teachings, as handed down to us by different Councils of the Church. Many of these are of insignificant value in themselves, but united they show a want of truthfulness which distinctly stamps the mundane character of the whole. A few examples may be quoted in support of this argument. If it be true that Judas Iscariot "cast down the thirty pieces of silver in the temple, and went and hanged himself" (Matthew xxvii. 5), the following statement in the Acts of the Apostles (i. 18) must be untrue: "Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity, and falling headlong he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out." How an omniscient God could have selected as a chosen apostle and disciple one he must have known all along would prove to be a despicable thief, and who would finally betray him, is very hard to understand! Matthew and Mark tell us that the two convicts crucified with Christ both reviled him with unseemly banter; Luke altogether denies this statement by affirming that, although one malefactor railed against him, the other, at the eleventh hour, was promised a seat in Paradise for testifying to his innocence. One or other of these accounts must be wholly erroneous. Matthew further states there was darkness over the entire world from the sixth to the ninth hour. As no mention has ever been made of this remarkable phenomenon by any contemporaneous historian, the probabilities against its occurrence are largely increased. A discrepancy next arises as to the number of guardian angels seen at the Holy Sepulchre. One only is referred to by Mark, who speaks of the celestial sentinel as a young man clothed in a long white garment (xvi. 5). This person requested the women at the tomb to inform

the grief-stricken disciples that their absent Lord had preceded them into Galilee, where they should see him. Luke, whose accounts are so often at issue with those of his fellow scribes, introduces two heavenly envoys instead of one, and details a bodily reappearance of Christ to two Apostles, between Emmaus and Bethany, who both completely failed to recognise their late Master; nor did they fully realise the singular mistake committed till, after having partaken of a meal of fish and honey, he bodily ascended beyond the clouds above, retiring into rarefied regions of atmosphere, where life, through extreme cold, becomes at once extinct. His materialisation before Mary is another proof that the first angel was completely wrong in supposing him to be in Galilee. We are told that "Christ was seen of the Twelve." Judas Iscariot, immediately after the betrayal of his Lord, either hanged himself or his bowels gushed out in the potter's field. Both versions are given as authentic. As his successor had not at that time been appointed, the statement contradicts itself! All the Gospel accounts distinctly lead us to infer that the disciples were exceedingly surprised at the return of their Leader, proving that till then they had entirely failed to recognise the whole character of his mission. That Christ did not consider himself to be a God is unmistakeably plain, for, on being addressed as "Good Master," he promptly replied, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, and that is God." The despairing words of agony on the cross are further attestation of this assertion. Does anybody suppose that, when the disciples were sent forth to preach the Gospel in foreign lands, they could possibly remove mountains, handle deadly serpents, or drink poison

without ill effects? Witchcraft and a belief in demoniac possession are now both known to be ridiculous delusions of the Dark Ages, whereby thousands of innocent victims lost their lives. The command in our Holy Bibles on which the slayers acted, however, still remains—"Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." Christ and his Apostles certainly considered their alleged powers of casting out devils and exorcising unclean spirits as a special proof of their Divine mission! This is witnessed in the remarkable story of the devils and the Gadarean swine.

The fixed anticipations of the early Christians that the end of the world and the second advent would occur simultaneously during the lifetime of those who made the assertion is proved to the hilt by prophecies which Matthew, Mark, and Luke alike place in the mouth of their Teacher, foretelling how, at his reappearance, the sun and moon would be darkened and the stars in heaven (vast solar systems) would fall upon this planet. Then shall we see "the Son of Man descending from the clouds in power and great glory," while, at the same time, the elect are to be gathered from "one end" of the firmament to the other. "Verily, I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away till all these things are fulfilled." The above prediction will be found copied verbatim in each Apostolic record already alluded to. Let us next inquire what St. Paul says in his Epistle to the Thessalonians. In chapter iv. he tells us: "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout [Who could possibly hear the call in the Antipodes?], with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air."

St. James states : " The coming of the Lord is at hand, and the end of all things draws nigh." Such expressions clearly indicate what was the current superstition of the ignorant early fathers. Nearly two thousand years have elapsed since these false prophecies were first set in circulation ; and yet, although finally disposed of as soon as the grave closed over the last bystander, foolish devotees still attempt to explain away what is absolutely inexplicable, and to maintain a mistaken faith in promises that have been unquestionably broken.

We will conclude our imperfect remarks in the cause of common sense by laying before the reader a short summary of the latest of our Biblical records, which, although familiar to clerical students, is not always as carefully scanned by lay observers. It is a most interesting exhibit of the boundless extent of Eastern imagination.

The book of Revelation, written, it is supposed, in the latter part of the first century of the Christian era or at the beginning of the second, foretelling events that were then promised immediate fulfilment, ceases now to have the same interest, since each antiquated prediction has received indefinite postponement.

The narrative we purpose considering is introduced by seven very singular minatory epistles addressed by the Apocalyptic writer to certain erring Christian colonies situated in Asia Minor. As these curious recriminations bear no connection whatever to the vaticinations we wish to study, they need not be further alluded to.

Through an open door, left conveniently ajar in the floating skies above, we are forthwith conducted straight to a central heaven in infinite space (mark the absurd contradiction), where a throne is described illuminated by

seven lamps and an emerald-green rainbow (this suggests rain). Little is related of the Divine occupant, but the singular statement is vouchsafed that he closely resembled jasper as well as a sardine stone. Concerning his attendant court we learn considerably more than we do of himself. If not numerous, they were beyond all question highly select. Four devout beasts, possessing the unique gift of speech and equipped with three pairs of bird-wings, first attract attention. In their company were found four-and-twenty elders provided with harps and golden crowns. Day and night each venerable patriarch gave utterance to monotonous chants, proclaiming prayer and praise, reminding the listener of the "La allah illahallah" of Mohammedan fanaticism, or of the "Om mani padmi om" of Buddhist worshippers. It is singular that day and night should be especially mentioned, as this division of time resulting from the rotation of our particular planet could not possibly exist in realms above. Each of the celestial quadrupeds possessed many eyes, some before and some behind, as well as others "within." The exact position of these intestinal orbs of vision is unfortunately not specially specified. Two of John's eccentric creations were shaped like a lion and a calf; the other two were formed like a man and an eagle. Then a book bound with seven seals, that proved singularly difficult to break, was opened by an intelligent lamb in a manner not stated. This lamb was endowed with seven horns and seven eyes. As each clasp of the sacred volume gave way to force, the unfortunate victims of heaven's displeasure received additional chastisement, awarded them for worshipping devils and golden idols, as well as for practising sorceries and fornication. An astounding

account is furnished of the fall upon this satellite of several solar systems. The contact of such vast heavenly bodies with this earth's crust must have caused our instant extinction. Nevertheless, it is related that, at the crucial juncture, four friendly angels (like Eolus having charge of the four winds of heaven), standing on the four corners of the earth (observe the shape then believed in), considerably took charge of 144,000 fortunate Jews—12,000 of each tribe—the rest of the world being allowed to stand out in the cold, *sans* mercy. The nationality of the writer of these predictions is very patent.

No sooner had the opening of the first seven seals terminated than a second group of seven avenging spirits appeared immediately to inflict further desolation on perplexed mankind. Fire, hail, and blood, through their instrumentality, fell freely upon the earth, and a third part of the sun, the moon, and the stars suffered complete annihilation in some inexplicable manner; but the prize for originality must be awarded to the unique genius of the fifth angel, who, having acquired the keys of the bottomless pit, forthwith thrust upon the world a vast army of winged locusts. These pulpy insects wore breastplates of iron upon their chests, and, "being shaped like horses prepared for battle," their scorpion sterns must have presented a very bob-tailed appearance to a nervous enemy in war time. Lions' teeth, together with women's hair, added gruesome adornment to each pestilent grasshopper, whose heads were said to have resembled those of humanity. King Apollyon commanded his strange battalions in person. As the sixth angel disposed of another extraordinary army of two hundred thousand thousand lion-headed

cavalry, between the hammer and the anvil of such hostile hosts it is a wonder anybody escaped overwhelming destruction. The seventh angel should at this moment have sounded his terrible trumpet, but before those martial strains were heard the eccentric prophet ate, for some unexplained reason, a remarkable little book (without a title, unfortunately), which, although "sweet to taste, proved in digestion exceedingly sour," or, as the Bible, less poetically, but more practically, puts it, he found it "bitter in his belly." Fresh wonders again develop in the chaotic medley before us. Two trees and two candlesticks, transformed into men, became "living witnesses of the Most High"; these martyrs, slain by a beast from the bottomless pit, "lay dead in the streets of the great city, spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." After three and a half days they curiously came again to life, and ascended forthwith into heaven.

A further phenomenon was that of a woman in travail, clothed with the sun—devoid of all other raiment, as we may suppose from this description—pursued by a great red-coated dragon, whose prodigious tail drew the stars from heaven and cast them down upon the earth's surface. This forbidding monster, with a vast flood flowing from his hideous jaws, persistently followed the unfortunate woman about, desiring to destroy her innocent offspring the moment the expected child might make its appearance. Mother earth humanely took compassion on the distressed lady, and, swallowing up the water as soon as it fell, enabled the afflicted wanderer thus to escape into the wilderness, aided by a pair of big wings providentially placed by an unknown hand at her disposal. There she remained in safety

1,260 days (three years and five months). "A time, and times, and half a time," the child after birth went up bodily into heaven; and we hear no more of either mother or infant.

Two devouring beasts next appear in John's rapidly-revolving kaleidoscope who had power to overwhelm the saints and to destroy them utterly! One arriving from the sea carried seven heads and ten golden-crowned horns. He possessed, in addition, the body of a leopard, bear's feet, and a lion's mouth! The second human scourge—produced on land—spake like a dragon, and, being able to work miracles, compelled all who traded, great or small, rich or poor, bond or free, to wear his mark, both on their foreheads and also on their right hands. Perhaps in this mandate may be recognised the origin of trade-marks. "Herein is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is six hundred and three score and six—666." He is also spoken of "as the beast that was, that is not, and yet is"!

Fortunately, we are now nearing the end of these protracted disturbances; but, before afflicted humanity attained final repose, seven celestial ministers of destruction received from heaven a rich consignment of seven baneful vials, brimful of additional punishment, prepared by the four devout beasts; with orders to distribute the contents of their ill-omened vessels upon earth's woeful children. Grievous sores fell plentifully; the sea being turned into blood added increased horror to the situation; while every living inmate therein naturally perished. All shipping also disappeared. Now, the River Euphrates suffered final collapse for the singular

reason "that the way of the kings of the East might thus be prepared." Unclean spirits, in the form of three active frogs, united all the nations of the earth upon the one great battlefield of Armageddon. The result of the sanguinary engagement is, however, not stated. By a big earthquake mighty Babylon was finally disposed of, and a new Jerusalem, all ready built above, descended miraculously from the clouds of heaven. The description of a highly-immoral Scarlet Lady, representing the fallen city, and carrying a curious cup of iniquity in her hand, does not bear repetition in polite circles. An explanation of the mystery of this improper person, riding a red beast with the usual seven heads and ten horns, is certainly, without exception, the most involved chapter in the whole collection, and throws no ray of light to illumine a single dark statement previously advanced.

A final paragraph introduces to our notice another batch of celestial and terrestrial combatants again contending for chieftainship, the vanquished warriors in this case being somewhat inconsiderately cast alive into a lake of burning fire and brimstone. The Devil himself was chained for a thousand years without much apparent object; but ultimately he too, upon his release, experienced the same violent treatment as the rest of his defeated followers. The sable monarch was accompanied to his last home by the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. The closing lines from Patmos are taken up with a fantastic description of the New Jerusalem.

When replacing this singular exhibition of a disordered imagination on our book-shelves, pity for the writer's diseased brain should be the dominant feeling

experienced by those whose mental faculties remain unimpaired after the perusal of such childish nonsense, which, we are told, without the smallest possibility of proof, is "the Word of God." Who made it such?

The Council of Laodicea, A.D. 366, rejected the whole of it as apocryphal, and for some time the book of Revelation ceased to be canonical, notwithstanding the curses pronounced in its last chapter.

The circumstances attendant on the foisting upon humanity of the sacred books of the New Testament which we now possess are worthy of the most careful consideration.

At the great gathering of the Church held at Nicæa, near Constantinople, A.D. 327, between forty and fifty highly-contradictory manuscripts were placed before the 318 assembled bishops.

To determine which documents were false and which were genuine, resource, as usual, was had to miraculous agencies.

Gathered around the high altar, the conscript fathers knelt in solemn conclave before their triune Deity, then but recently established. When, oh joyful omen! the present Canonical Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—leapt spontaneously from the humble position they occupied on the floor of the building, and sorted themselves, with pious aptitude, on the table of our Lord.

The less active Gospels attributed to St. James, St. Thomas, Nicodemus, Hermas, and others, not possessing the same mysterious powers of levitation as their more fortunate neighbours, were, alas, swept ruthlessly aside. Among these must be noted one of

the highest possible interest, as it ascribed the paternity of Christ to Josephus Pandora, the Roman officer of a Calabrian regiment which at that time was quartered in the village of Bethany.

Of the Pauline contributions to the New Testament modern criticism considers that only three out of the whole fourteen assigned to him—viz., “the Epistles to the Romans, Galatians, and Corinthians”—can be considered as at all genuine. In the Dark Ages we know that all knowledge filtered to us through a body of intolerant monks wallowing in vice, who wilfully falsified everything they handled, and punished as heretics, by the rack and the stake, every honest inquirer who doubted their assertions. Pope Leo X., himself the victim of a loathsome disease, declared that their privileges were secured “by the fable of Jesus Christ.” Can we conceive it possible that the great First Cause would have communicated his secrets to mankind through such unreliable agencies?

As a proof of the excesses into which religious mania can plunge its victims, the following is an interesting example. At the beginning of the past century Margareta Peter, the youngest daughter of a farmer of that name, succeeded in persuading herself and all her family that she was divinely inspired. The idea daily grew upon these mad devotees that the world was in danger from the Devil gaining supremacy over it, and that Margareta alone stood in the way to protect the fallen races of mankind. On March 8th, 1823, all the disciples of this strange cult were summoned to Wildisbush, near Shaffhausen, where they were told the final struggle with the armies of Satan would be held. Being assembled in one room, the Holy Margareta

declared that Anti-Christ was there among them, and could only be resisted by the elect striking and smiting themselves, the furniture, and indeed everything within reach. The battle lasted many hours, and was renewed from day to day till the 13th, when the police interfered under their Amptmann, or magistrate. On breaking into the house, everything was found in unutterable disorder. The furniture was all destroyed; men and women lay about the floor in singular confusion, beating themselves and their neighbours with all the force they could muster. Order was finally restored after some trouble. Unfortunately, the combatants were injudiciously allowed to return again to the same residence. The comedy this time speedily developed into a most direful tragedy. The Holy Maid, as she was styled by her followers, declared that Satan could not henceforth be defeated without the shedding of blood, and, falling upon her brother Caspar, she nearly stamped the life out of that unfortunate relation. While he was being carried off by her father in an unconscious condition to an adjoining apartment, Margaretta announced that her sister Elizabeth must forthwith die for the salvation of souls. Nothing loath, the unfortunate woman submitted herself without complaint to the many blows that were forthwith rained upon her unresisting head. Elizabeth's lifeless corpse was soon a bleeding mass of mutilated mortality. It might have been supposed that one victim's death would have allayed the zealot's thirst for carnage, but at this stage of the proceedings, the Holy Leader pronounced herself about to die as a vicarious atonement for sin. By her own directions her hands and feet were nailed to blocks of wood, placed in the form of a cross horizontally on

the floor, while additional spikes were driven into her elbows and both breasts. To end these torments and to secure immediate death, a knife was thrust into her palpitating heart, while with her latest breath she promised that a joyful resurrection should ensue on the third day. With the utmost confidence the disciples awaited the fulfilment of the prophecy. Of course, when all too late, the police reappeared, and the purblind participants of these orgies underwent long terms of rigorous imprisonment.

We give another instance, from recent American newspapers, of a similar superstitious outbreak :—

“Incredible stories have been published lately describing weird and extraordinary revival scenes on Beal’s Island, Maine. My investigation proves that the reports are substantially true. Three preachers, belonging to a sect entitled ‘The Holy Ghost and Us,’ stirred the simple fisherfolk of the State to delirious frenzy, preaching the doctrine of hell fire, and exhorting one and all to sacrifice everything to avoid it. Meetings began in the afternoon and lasted until midnight. They were held daily, most of the women of the place falling completely under the sway of the preachers. The little town is still divided into two hostile camps, and families are broken up. One man stated that his wife had been recently converted, and was always waking him up at night, screaming and commanding him to believe. If he refused assent, she struck him over the head with a Bible, threatening to pound the Holy Ghost into him, or failing that to beat him to death. Elder Buber’s method consisted in picturing the awful torments awaiting unrepentant sinners. He worked himself into a frenzy, shouting, leaping, grovelling on

the floor, performing astonishing feats of contortion! Dogs and cats were slaughtered by the fanatics. The sacrifice of a child's life was narrowly averted. A sane man present fortunately seized the victim and dashed for the entrance-door of the meeting-house, holding the crowd off while the frightened youngster fled to a secure hiding-place. The authorities on the mainland, notified of the extraordinary proceedings, have now prohibited religious meetings of any kind. A number of the fisherfolk had already gone absolutely insane. Some were preparing to sell their houses and all their possessions to give to the designing preachers. Previous to reaching Beal's Island the missionaries toured other districts, preaching, however, unsuccessfully. At Grand Nevah Island, off Passamaquoddy Bay, the sturdy fisherfolk received their visitors—in the quaint language of the reporter—with 'a volley of rocks and sticks.' ”

III.

SCIENTIFIC DISPROOF OF HEBREW SCRIPTURES

A Return from Fables to Reality.

THE discovery, during the last fifty years, of human implements and weapons associated with the bones of extinct animals in deposits that must have taken tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of years to form is conclusive proof that the dates assigned to the first appearance of mankind in Biblical records are strangely at variance with established facts.

In endeavouring to master the origin of our species on the surface of the earth, it behoves each inquirer after truth to decide for himself between a remarkable Jewish version of creation, on the one hand, and what is ascertained beyond dispute by all the 'ologies, on the other. Faith and science are the opposing factors. We must either subscribe to a rational theory of evolution, which demonstrates at each step our affinity to every form of life that has existed upon this planet for millions of years, or we must bow in blind belief before incredulous and contradictory statements which Cufic cylinders recently discovered in the ruins of Koyunjik (ancient Nineveh) lead us to suppose are of early Chaldean fabrication.

Geological and zoological research informs us that all

vegetable and animal existence was first evolved from minute particles of homogeneous slime, or protoplasm, called protozoa or protista. These, including monera, amoebæ, flagellata, rhizopoda, infusoria, and other primeval forms, originally reproduced themselves non-sexually by sub-division.

The next advance proceeds from male and female germ cells, which gastrulæ repeat themselves also by sub-division, but only after impregnation of the parent cell by the male germ. This is common to all the higher life, and is known as reproduction from egg cleavage.

In the Laurentian division of primordial strata we meet with fossil remains first occurring in the petrified cells of the eozone canadiense, of the order of rhizopods. Some portion of the Alps, a part of the Himalayas, and the stones with which the pyramids of Egypt are built, are entirely formed of the homes of these primitive little atoms. Algæ (tangled seaweed), molluscs, and various crustacea embedded in stone amply prove that first life was originally enjoyed in water. In the secondary stratas Saurian monsters succeed the ganoids. These huge amphibians are found in the chalk beds, which also contain winged lizards and singular birds, possessing, in some instances, teeth. Marsupials and mammals close the list, of which apes and men are the final development. Sponges and coral belong to that curious class of zoophytes which are called plant animals; strictly speaking, they adhere to neither category wholly.

We have heard a great deal of the creation of this world for mankind. The proportion of time his earliest traces prove him to have existed will be best understood

by the following table, taking 100 as the factor for sub-division :—

		Per cent.
Quaternary or Anthropolithic Epoch (Man)	...	0.5
Tertiary or Cærolithic	„	2.3
Secondary or Mesolithic	„	11.5
Primary or Palæolithic	„	32.1
Primordial or Archilithic	„	53.6

The total thickness of the stratified rocks is assumed at about 130,000 feet, say twenty-five miles in depth, comprised as follows :—

Tertiary	...	...	{ Pliocene Miocene Eocene }	...	3,000 feet.
Secondary	...	...	{ Chalk Jurassic Triassic }	...	15,000 feet.
Primary	...	...	{ Permian Carboniferous Devonian }	...	42,000 feet.
Primordial	...	...	{ Silurian Cambrian Laurentian }	...	70,000 feet.

In the above survey we have life carried back as far as the Laurentian era of primordial rocks, over which twenty-five miles of gradual deposit has since been slowly super-imposed ; this means, possibly, hundreds of millions of years. As yet no man can say how life first developed itself—spontaneously, in all probability ; but, being a problem not at present proven, the riddle remains unread.

Embryology shows the relationship between man and his Simian progenitors to be of the closest resemblance. When a monkey and a man are brought into the world all the functions of reproduction are identical, from first to last, in every particular. Indeed, in every anatomical respect, the differences between the highest development of apes and the lowest are wider than that between the highest development of monkeys and the lowest of mankind. The gorilla approaches man nearest in the

structure of hands and feet, the chimpanzee in important details of the skull, the orang-outang in the development of the brain, and the gibbon in that of the thorax. American apes are found endowed with four more teeth than those of the old world, and their nostrils are situated more at the side and less at the base of the nasal bones, which are broader. This anatomical disposition establishes the fact that men differentiated from anthropoid forefathers of the old, and not from those of the new, world. It is probable such changes occurred some time in the Tertiary period, before the Quaternary or Diluvial epoch had existence. The missing link has not yet been disinterred. The Java skull is, perhaps, the nearest approach to it. Let us hope that Time's effacing finger may some day yield the long-sought-for clue.

The most interesting proof of man's affinity to the lower forms of life is found in the revelations of foetal development. In egg cleavage, from the fertilised female ova we are, as already stated, but one degree removed from the moneron, who repeats himself non-sexually. When, at the third week of fecundity, we possess the complete likeness and attributes of fish germs, with gills like a salmon and a tail like a tarpon, it is clear we are passing through a stage enjoyed by all living organisms possibly fifty million years ago. At the seventh week of conception our tails begin to disappear, and arms and legs are represented by four short stumps. At this period we have matured into incipient animals, and our development for many weeks is identical. With such facts before us, it seems impossible that our near relationship to humbler types can be disputed for a single moment. It has been for some years accepted by every man of science in all countries.

Only those misguided beings who prefer the fables of antiquity to the established facts of ontogeny can ignorantly deny what wise men affirm. A thorough course of Huxley, Haeckel, Darwin, and Laing is recommended to those who wish to inform themselves on these subjects.

The writer well remembers Professor Owen saying, with his kindly and sagacious smile, when pacing the decks of a P. and O. steamer while seeking a warmer climate in tropical latitudes, that "want of belief in scientific research reveals the man plainly, whose abundant faith corresponds completely with his mental capacity."

In one of his learned lectures delivered in America, Professor Huxley gives an interesting digest of the discovery by our American cousins of the horse ancestors in prehistoric times.

In the Yale College Museum are collected the proofs how the hoof, or single diget, of to-day developed by natural selection from the five fingers or toes of bygone progenitors.

No one visiting museums of antiquities can have the slightest doubt that the hand of man failed to fashion all the stone implements shown in these interesting collections. The bones of bygone ancestors, being more perishable than their ancient silicious weapons, have naturally disappeared during the lapse of ages, except in rare instances when peat moss, lime water, and other preservatives, have arrested the gradual process of dissolution.

Prehistoric relics found in these islands lead us to believe that man lived in Great Britain when our country was attached to France, the climate then prevalent being congenial to the habits of the elephant,

the rhinoceros, the hippopotamus, the lion, cave bear, and hyæna.

Stone implements are divided into two classes—the neolithic and palæolithic. The former, which often exhibit considerable artistic shape and finish, are not deemed to be of very ancient origin. This decision is arrived at from the light depth of soil in which they are usually discovered. Palæolithic handiwork, however, transports us into a fathomless past. Unknown æons of time have rolled by since our early progenitors first acquired the art of stone chipping. To this skill all civilisation is doubtless attributable. Those apes who originally discovered they could kill their enemies more easily with the assistance of chipped stones soon became dominant factors in the great struggle for existence, in the same way that the American settler has, with his rifle and bowie knife, displaced the savage.

Although the antiquity of flint implements was recognised as far back as the eighteenth century, it is but fifty years ago that Monsieur Bouchier de Perthes first called the attention of the civilised world to these heirlooms of the ages, and initiated inquiries which have led to their identification in every portion of the habitable globe.

The department of the Dordogne—where the enterprising Frenchman originally formed his collection—is rich in a peculiar class of human relics, from the fact that the Troglodites of that district were skilled, like their brethren in Switzerland, in depicting human and other forms on horn and ivory. Two of these drawings are of supreme interest—one of a mammoth scratched on mammoth ivory, found in the ossiferous caverns of La Madelain, Perigord; while the other, a most artistic

life-study of a reindeer feeding beside a pool of stagnant water, came from Schaffhausen, Switzerland. As reindeer only inhabit northern elevations, and as the hairy elephant—judging from latitudes wherein his remains have usually been disinterred—was also a denizen of frigid zones, the cold thus proved by these pictures as then prevalent throughout Europe must have been preceded by long periods of tropical heat, when the hippopotamus, the rhinoceros, and the ordinary elephant migrated northwards from the stagnant swamps of Central Africa to the more fertile vegetation of our British Isles. The Mediterranean Sea and the English Channel, which in either case would have barred their progress, most probably at that time were non-existent. Exotic plants recently found in a petrified state on the frozen shores of Greenland doubtless date from the same epoch.

When the truths of astronomy were first taught by Copernicus we can easily understand the menaced Churchmen's feverish anxiety to stifle at its birth all honest inquiry, as witnessed by the cruel persecution of the great Galileo, Giordano Bruno, and other distinguished men of enlightenment. Hell, located on this earth—one microscopic satellite of a single solar system—was bound, by their discoveries, finally to disappear. The happy habitation called heaven—with our present knowledge—is equally as difficult of definition as any place of eternal torment. The Californian telescope tells us of thousands of millions of solar spheres, each requiring as much space for its planetary functions as our own—viz., 10,000,000,000 miles. The natural inference is that a measureless number of other suns are probably whirling in like manner, beyond our

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utmost vision, in the frozen emperion. Can a trinity such as that defined by the Athanasian Creed be supposed to regulate these mighty movements from any central seat of government? How can finite man insist upon a personal management in infinite space? Our limited brains are certainly unable to fathom infinity; but that fact surely affords no argument why we should permit, without protest, a vast variety of childish creeds to be palmed off upon us by designing people as necessary to eternal salvation. As dogma and mystery disappear before the light of common sense and superior information, it is to the scholar, and not to the ecclesiastic, that we must henceforth turn for guidance into the paths of peace.

A great deal has been written and said of the sufferings which unbelievers are supposed to experience when, at the hour of death, a fancied day of judgment mysteriously menaces them. This is another invention of clericalism. A dying man who has no longer the least fear of spending any portion of a possible hereafter in a burning lake, tormented by hosts of devils, adorned with horns, bat wings, tails, and tridents, experiences a far happier departure than the credulous believer of Syrian myths, who, harassed by doubt—if he has any intelligence—is uncertain of his future destination. As the Agnostic peacefully passes the Rubicon, "I know nothing," he whispers: "Should there be another life beyond the quiet grave, my prospects of everlasting happiness cannot be lessened one iota because I decline to swallow what my reason tells me has been incontestably proved to be fallacious. Justice at the close of an honest life—not mercy for imaginary crimes—is all we demand and have a right to expect."

